

Tips for Parents: How to Help Your Child with Writing

Things you can do at home to create a supportive environment that encourages writing:

- Talk with your child about places you visit, work you do, books you read, or television programs you watch together.
- Encourage your child to read, especially things he or she chooses, and let your child see you read.
- Praise your child's efforts at writing. Be primarily interested in content. Emphasize your child's successes. For every error your child makes, there are a dozen things done well. Resist the tendency to focus only on errors of spelling, punctuation, and other mechanical parts of writing.
- Provide a suitable place for your child to write—a flat surface, good light, a comfortable chair.
- Give gifts (and encourage others to do the same for birthdays and special occasions) associated with writing: pens, pencils, pads of paper, stationery, a dictionary or thesaurus, erasers—even stamps.
- Encourage your child to write away for information, free samples, travel brochures, etc.
- Be alert to occasions when your child can be involved in writing. Writing for real purposes is rewarding, and the daily activities of families present many opportunities for purposeful writing (telephone messages or notes to family members).

Selected comments from NCTE brochure "How To Help Your Child Become A Better Writer." Printed with permission from NCTE

Helpful questions you can ask when your child brings writing home:

About **Purpose and Audience:**

- *What do you want to write about? Why?*
- *Who will want or need to read this?*
- *What do you want your reader to know or do?*
- *How will you present it to the reader?*

About **Idea Development/Support:**

- *Do your details help the reader understand:*
- *Are they the best details and examples for the reader and for your purpose?*
- *Have you explained important ideas?*
- *Do your examples focus on the main ideas?*
- *Do your details make the ideas clearer?*

About **Organization:**

- *Did you stick to your plan throughout the piece of writing?*
- *Does the order of the ideas make sense?*
- *Does all of your information fit together?*
- *Do your ideas lead the reader easily from one to another?*
- *Will your reader be able to follow all of your thinking?*

About **Sentences:**

- *Do your sentences have different lengths? Different beginnings? Different structures?*
- *Or do they sound too much alike?*
- *Do your sentences express complete thoughts?*

About **Wording:**

- *Have you used a variety of words to make your meaning clear?*
- *Do the words say what you mean?*
- *Are all of your words used correctly?*

About **Correctness:**

- *Have you made any mistakes in spelling?*
- *Do you see any punctuation problems?*
- *Have you used capital letters correctly?*